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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes the use of corporal punishment, attitudes towards it, and alternatives to it. Topics covered include: (1) a definition of corporal punishment; (2) descriptions and examples of different types; (3) a brief history of its use in schools and society; (4) arguments in favor of its use; (5) arguments for abolition; (6) scientific, behavioral, and medical opinions regarding its effects; (7) steps in reassessing a discipline policy; (8) alternative methods of dealing with traditional school trouble spots; and (9) alternative methods of handling different types of disruptive students including hard-core criminals, radical protesters, abused and neglected children, temporarily disturbed children, and children of different cultures. The handbook concludes with a chart of alternative responses to a child's disruptiveness and a 20-item bibliography of related readings. (DC)

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CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HANDBOOK

Adah Maurer, Ph.D.

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CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF AMERICAN SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Generation Books
977 Keeler, Berkeley, Ca. 94708

To Puncho and Pawnee and their children and to all children everywhere.

Corporal Punishment Handbook
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977 Keeler, Berkeley, Ca. 94708

DEFINITION

Corporal punishment is the infliction of pain upon the body of the child because of an act of disobedience, omission of an assigned task or the commission of an error. It does not include temporary restraint of a child nor the removal of a weapon - such as a rock - from a child bent on destruction.

A wide variety of means are used but most commonly such punishment consists of blows on the buttocks by a paddle or a strap.

Instrument

The paddle is a wooden board and may be as small as a tongue depressor or as large as a boat oar. The average paddle is 2' long, 4" wide and made of ¼" plywood or heavy pine. It may be inscribed with an admonition (OUCH!) or a joke (Board of Education), or drilled with welt raising holes. When these form the initials of the punisher, the process is called, "branding."

Number

The number of blows is usually at the discretion of the punisher. They may be as few as one or two or as many as twenty to fifty depending upon the size and sex of the child and the mood of the punisher.

Position

The child is required to assume a position designated by the punisher, usually bent forward over a chair or table, or in a hands on knees or touch toes position. If the child refuses to bend he may be excused as incorrigible and some other penalty applied, or he may be forcibly held down by other adults while the blows are given.

Where

Some schools have a paddle in each room for the use of the teacher. Paddling in front of the class adds the embarrassment of the presence of peers. Other schools have only one, in the office of the principal, with perhaps a second with the coach.

Effect

The immediate effect on the child ranges from mild embarrassment to permanent injury. It is always intended to be reasonable, to pain the child without harming him, but escalation is an ever present possibility.

EXAMPLES

Straps, when used, have been of leather, electric cord, rope, wire or chains. The pain is inflicted on the child's hands, legs, back, bottom or other parts of the body.

Other instruments that have been used include a ruler, yardstick, drawer divider, brass knuckles, split baseball bat, books, gymnastic and shop equipment, wet towel, baton and rubber hose.

Other forms that corporal punishment has taken include:

Punching and pounding with clenched fist.
Shaking, choking, karate chops.
Kicking, kneeing, stomping.
Pinching, jabbing, tweaking of nose, ears etc.
Slapping the face, cuffing the ears, jerking arms.
Lifting the child by the hair.
Throwing child to the floor or against a wall.
Blowing a whistle directly into child's ear.
Throwing a heavy or pointed object at the child.
Slamming the head down onto the desk.
Breaking teeth, injuring eye, skull fracture.
Use of an inductorium to give electric shocks.
Sealing mouth with tape or tissues.
Requiring excessive running of laps, push- or pull-ups or other exercises to the point of pain or injury.
Forcing the holding of an uncomfortable position such as tiptoe with hands up for long periods.
Withholding bathroom privileges until child is in pain.

HISTORY

Corporal punishment of subordinates is an ancient custom. Originally it was intended as a more humane form of handling rebellion. In Biblical times, the fate of a stubborn son was, after a due process of consultation with the town elders, to be stoned to death (Deut. 21:18-21). Later, as recorded in Proverbs, the death penalty was softened to beating with a rod. "If you beat him with a rod he will not die." (Pro. 23: 13).

With the advent of Christianity, official practice no longer included child sacrifice and castration, but it was not until the eleventh century that whipping disappeared from the nunneries and later from other religious retreats.

Slavery was maintained with whips all through the centuries, but apprentices and other servants were also subject to beatings at the whim of their masters.

The American armed services stopped using the lash for drunken or disorderly conduct in 1853, but the English navy continued the dread cat-o-nine-tails until after a series of mutinies three decades later.

The thrashing of prisoners lasted well into the present century. So too did laws permitting husbands to reasonably chastise their wives.

Schoolmasters have traditionally used a ferule, a cane or a hickory stick. At Harvard College, a master used "an oak log big enough to kill a horse" but he was terminated and the faculty forbidden from physically punishing scholars in 1734.

Corporal punishment of school children is no longer permitted in European countries or Asia although it continues in Britain and in the English speaking former colonies: Australia, New Zealand and in some provinces of Canada. In the United States corporal punishment has been outlawed in New Jersey, Massachusetts and Maine and in most of the largest cities: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Pittsburg, San Francisco, Baltimore, New Orleans. It has largely disappeared from the affluent suburbs and from university towns.

Recent decisions of the Supreme Court have imposed restrictions upon the severity of such punishments. At this time in our history, the subject is under severe scrutiny to determine future trends.

DEFENDERS

Principal's Prerogative

Those who prefer the continued use of corporal punishment do not all agree upon details. The most adamant insist that the discretion of the building administrator should not be questioned; as a professional person he should be trusted to use good judgment, discretion and to have the best interests of the children at heart. Any outside interference weakens his authority, reduces the respect with which he is held and permits disorder.

Some Restrictions

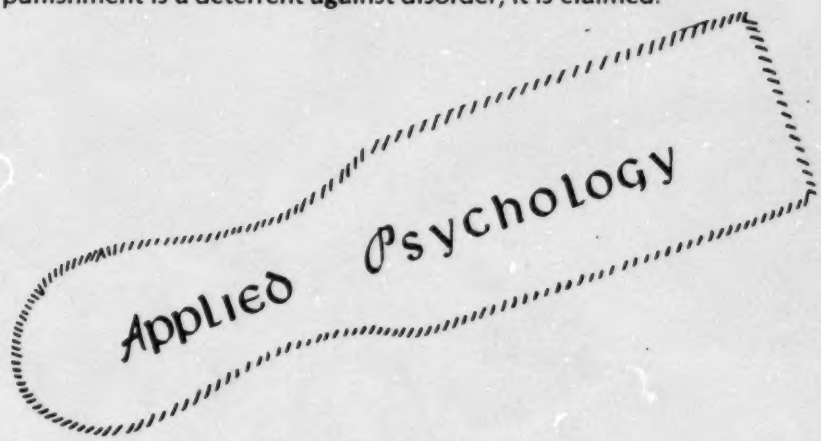
Others agree in principle, yet they recognize that bounds have been overstepped in some cases, that not all schoolmen interpret "reasonable" with the same concern, that accidents happen, and that probably some general rules might be wise.

Safeguards

Recommended are such safeguards as: not by any teacher, not in the presence of other children, not without a witness, keeping a written record, parental permission, and only to be used as a last resort after all other means of correcting the child have been tried.

Only as a Threat

A third group claim that although they never use a paddle themselves, nevertheless believe that permission to use it in an emergency should not be denied. The threat if not the actual use of corporal punishment is a deterrent against disorder, it is claimed.



AREAS OF AGREEMENT

Children in an attentive, busy, orderly class progress in their studies more successfully than children teasing, running about purposelessly and annoying others.

Children who are eager to learn should not be victimized by others less well motivated.

If the teacher is distracted by the effort to control a few disrupters, time spent constructively will be reduced and the teachers' energy dissipated.

All teachers must be able to defend themselves if attacked or threatened with physical harm. They must also be able to protect other students and school property in case of a riot or other public disturbance.

There is no disagreement about these preferences whether we have an open classroom with freedom for the students to choose their own activities or a closed classroom with a certain amount of ritual. In both the progress toward educational goals is slowed when disruption is allowed to run rampant and the on-target students interrupted and distracted by a handful of difficult ones.

But there is no evidence that corporal punishment is the only or even the best way to achieve this most desirable learning environment.

Corporal punishment is quick and easy. In many cases it produces sudden quiet in a whole cohort of kids although only one was smacked. But there is no evidence the behavior the next day, the next week, month, year or lifetime is improved.

Many men eminent in public life today were physically punished as boys. It did not seem to hurt them. But these reminiscences were of stern fathers with a lifetime commitment to his children and who also instilled family pride, a quite different situation.

QUESTIONABLE DEFENSES

"It is rarely used."

This claim cannot be documented. No reliable data exists since few surveys have been made and in those a strong tendency to minimize was evident. Administrators resist keeping track even when required. Some consider it unimportant, some are embarrassed when they look seriously at the numbers. But surveys in California, Dallas and Dade County as well as newspaper accounts of the more outrageous incidents leave no doubt about the ubiquitious although hidden dimensions of the use of corporal punishment in the schools.

"It is only used as a last resort after all other means of discipline have been tried."

"Last resort" usually means after reminding and scolding but little more. Other measures such as parent conferences, referral to the school psychologist, detention, suspension, exclusion, transfer or any genuine attempt to understand the child and the world in which he lives, regularly come after the "last" resort.

"It is not child abuse since it is given with love and for the purpose of teaching."

Abusers rarely intend to damage the child. Most of them love the children. But under pressure, discipline escalates. Whether light or severe, the question remains: Is pain the best teacher? Aren't there better ways to show that one cares?

"It is only one tool among many."

Children are more like fine watches than like horseshoes. A sledge hammer is of no use in the tool box of a jeweler.

"Parents insist upon its use."

What parents want is a good education for their children. They do not want them running the streets if suspended, nor can they afford days off for each small infraction. They have a right to expect that the schools can and will handle routine mistakes and inadequacies and that the schools will **teach** both subject matter and decorum. Schools abrogate their responsibility as the bearers of cultural norms if they follow the least adept members of the community in dependence upon crude methods of control.

ARGUMENTS FOR ABOLITION

Those who favor abolition of corporal punishment include both realistic and utopian thinkers.

Permissiveness

Among the utopians, some point to the injustices in our society that are responsible for many of our difficulties. Poverty, racism, sexism, child abuse, and attempts to alleviate these (sometimes worse than the original problem) cheat children of their chance to grow normally. The antidote, claim these theorists, is to abolish all rules. Some go as far as to advocate the de-schooling of America. But unstructured freedom leaves such children vulnerable to exploitation. Demands for an end to compulsory education or for the abandonment of all rules are irresponsible.

Middle Class Values

Utopians also tend to believe that when differing cultures rub against each other, the result will be expanded understanding for all. In the long run this is generally true, but the process is abrasive and often sparks fly first in the classroom. When teachers with high personal standards of diction and decorum are confronted with an alien argot they may be unable to appreciate the strength and beauty of a strange culture. Advice to eliminate corporal punishment that insists that teachers forego their middle class values, on the theory that all cultures are equally acceptable, leaves the teacher with no guidelines. The result is likely to be chaos. This, too, is irresponsible.

Realism

To the realistic educator with the long term purpose of building character and confidence in his students, the end of corporal punishment does not mean the end of discipline, merely the end of crude, primitive enforcement of power. Realistic reasons for adopting alternatives are based on scientific evidence regarding side effects, on recognition of the trend toward cooperation over coercion and a preference for larger goals for education than mere silence and blind obedience.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

The American Psychological Association gave these reasons for opposing corporal punishment:

> The resort to corporal punishment tends to reduce the likelihood of employing more effective humane and creative ways of interacting with children.
>
> It is evident that socially acceptable goals of education, training and socialization can be achieved without the use of physical violence against children, and that children so raised, grow to moral and competent adulthood.
>
> Corporate punishment intended to influence undesirable responses may create in the child the impression that he or she is an undesirable person, an impression that lowers self esteem and may have chronic consequences.
>
> Research has shown that to a considerable extent children learn by imitating the behavior of adults, especially those they are dependent upon, and the use of corporal punishment by adults having authority over children is likely to train children to use physical violence to control behavior rather than rational persuasion, education and intelligent forms of positive and negative reinforcement.
>
> Research has shown that the effective use of punishment in eliminating undesirable behavior requires precision in timing, duration, intensity and specificity, as well as considerable sophistication in controlling a variety of relevant environmental and cognitive factors, such that punishment administered in institutional settings without attention to all these variables, is likely to instill hostility, rage, and a sense of powerlessness without reducing the undesirable behavior.

From the Resolution adopted by the Council of the American Psychological Association, January, 1974.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

"From animal research we know that avoidance behavior is the first response to pain. If escape is impossible, the organism will attack anything available - an otherwise peaceable cagemate, a tennis ball, the cage, or even itself (Azrin and Holtz). Translated into human terms we find the child will first try to escape, by lying, by accusing others, by wriggling or by truancy, daydreaming or school phobia. If escape is impossible, he becomes aggressive and fights with his "cagemates." Biting and scratching at the cage is certainly vandalism and this too we find resulting from excessive punishment.

"Lastly when no other recourse is left the animal bites himself. We also see in some extreme cases, child suicidal behavior, usually described as 'self destructive.'"

"A study conducted in Portland, Oregon, has shown that as corporal punishment increases in a particular school there is an increase in student vandalism."

"...Some behavioral scientists maintain that there is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate the specific negative effects of corporate punishment. There never will be the type of controlled research that some require for scientific proof. Our laws, ethics and morals forbid the practice of using human 'guinea pigs.'"

From the amicus curiae brief presented to the Supreme Court in the case of Ingraham v. Wright, 1976 by the Task Force on the rights of children and youth of the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility of the American Psychological Association.

AND CHILDREN ARE PEOPLE, TOO.

OPINIONS OF THE RESPECTED

"Man was born into barbarism. He becomes endowed with a conscience. And now he has reached the day when violence toward another human being must become as abhorrent as eating another's flesh."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The worst things seems to be for a school to work with methods of fear, force and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the healthy feelings, the integrity, and the self-confidence of the pupils. All that it produces is a servile helot."

Albert Einstein

"It is our view that corporal punishment is both dehumanizing and counterproductive."

Irving Anker, Chancellor
New York City Public Schools

"Beating in child rearing actually has its roots in slavery..."

William H. Grier, M.D.
Price M. Cobbs, M.D.
in **Black Rage**

"Punitive methods of social control no doubt work. They would not have been so widely practiced throughout human history if they did not. But they have unfortunate by-products...The student who is studying to avoid punishment will find other ways of avoiding it such as being truant or dropping out. Punitive control may lead him to vandalize school property, to attack teachers, and when he becomes a voter, to refuse to support education. All these by-products can be avoided by turning to non-punitive ways."

B.F. Skinner
Harvard University

"The punished shrug it off as the fortunes of war. Our classrooms are filled with acts of retaliation."

Theodore Dreikurs.

"The buttocks as the locus for the induction of pain (is considered) a safe locus. However the anal region is also precisely the major erotic zone at the time at which the child is likely to be beaten there. Thus it is aptly chosen to achieve deranged sexuality in adulthood."

David Bakan

"Physical punishment was the favored disciplinary method of both fathers and mothers of delinquent boys."

Glueck & Glueck

"Punishment escalates when not controlled - even by men fundamentally well intentioned."

E. Tonningsen

"Oh, come now, Frimsly, in the school of education we never resort ot capital punishment."

MEDICAL OPINION

"Sometimes the quickest way to a boy's brain is through the seat of his pants."

This presumed joke is not without an element of truth. Blows to the lower end of the spinal column do send shock waves the length of the spinal column, jarring and minibruising each vertebra and nerve opening as it goes. The transmission to the brain itself from the top vertebra may cause a subdur. al hematoma. It may even be that the prevalence of lower back pain among American workers may have its origin in these early bruisings.

"I would never paddle a child in ill health."

But how can a principal or teacher know what is the exact state of a child's physical and emotional health at any given time? One child with a bad heart died after a comparatively mild paddling. Another was permanently paralyzed in one leg due to sciatic nerve damage attributed to a blow with a paddle that hit the back of the thigh. Permanently swollen and crocked knuckles have resulted from repeated ruler rapping.

Shall we require a certificate of physical fitness before we paddle?

HOW TO REASSESS A DISCIPLINE POLICY

1. Make a survey.

Instead of guessing or claiming that paddles are rarely used, find out the facts. By resolution of the Board or on order from the superintendent, each building principal provides a report for a specified time how many instances of corporal punishment happened in his/her school by age, grade, sex, ethnicity, status (normal, gifted, handicapped, retarded etc.) and the student behavior that merited such measures.

It will generally be found that such punishments cluster in comparatively few schools and unequally between classrooms. Many schools and many individual teachers are able to function well without resorting to the paddle. In Miami, for example, of 242 schools reporting for the first three months of the 1976-77 school year, 99 schools physically punished no student while 8 schools paddled more than 80 each, one of them listing 193 and another admitting to 307 instances of corporal punishment, an average of one child paddled every academic hour every day since school opened.

It may be found that one racial group or other takes the brunt of the punishment. The Miami survey indicated that Afro-American students, who comprised 28 percent of the students took 60 percent of the punishments among the males, and 80 percent among the females.

In spite of the fact that the practice is defended as necessary to protect the teachers, most paddlings are of pupils too young to be able to assault an adult. The California 1972 survey found that less than 5 percent of the reported instances were of high school age and that the middle and junior high grades (8-14) listed almost 30,000. Those children were too small to pose any possible danger.

Area superintendents given the figures may be asked to comment. "I have no explanation," said the man in Miami in charge of the heavy use area. "Once I've studied the figures, I'll want to talk to my principals about this."

Local data gives rise to more questions and the need becomes clear that a reexamination of priorities is in order.

How to Reassess a Discipline Policy:

2. Set up in-service training projects on alternatives.

This can be a course offered by a well known system such as Teacher Effectiveness Training, Transactional Analysis, Adlerian Psychology, Schools Without Failures or some version of behavior modification: tokens or some system of rewards. These have been very well received but unless they are tied specifically to the elimination of corporal punishment they may miss the point. A list of readings will be found on page 32.

Others may wish to explore their own resources first. The successful teachers may be asked to share their know-how although some are such skilled artists at teaching that they have never analysed in detail just what made them capable. Modest ones may even credit the good fortune of always getting good students. The school psychologist, the school social worker, the counselors and other pupil personnel workers can be invaluable in several ways. They can recommend or devise strategies; they can confer with principals individually or in groups; they can locate areas of resistance and misunderstanding; they can be resource persons to set up and a staff a cooling off room if that should prove necessary. And they can be assigned to make a thorough study of those children who most provoke their teachers.

Probation officers who return delinquents to their schools in the belief that they are better off there (quite probably correctly) may be asked to consult with the teachers and staff in regard to the best approach in specific cases.

The introduction of the new regime may be with fanfare or quietly. One school built a bonfire with the collected paddles and snake danced about the playground. Another laminated the paddles and kept them on display. A third made no announcement but simply went about the business of teaching. When students finally asked they were told with a smile: "But everyone is being good this year."It was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the Principal's Office

Nancy T. Conzett

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TROUBLE SPOTS

Fighting

Fathers tell their sons to defend themselves. At school they are forbidden to fight regardless. This double bind leaves them with no firm moral standard or any knowledge about the proper response to being called a name that reflects on their race, their intelligence or their body build.

They can only protest, "He started it." or "He hit me first," as the case may be.

When the response to this is a paddling, the only possible lesson the boy can learn is that if you are big it is all right to hit little kids.

In some ways this reflects our world where might makes right, power permits anything and laws are only for weaklings. But this is not the ethic we teach in words, nor is it the lesson we send children to school to learn. We want them to respect law and believe that liberty and justice is for all.

It would be well if we put our actions where our mouths are. If we want children to grow up to understand the fine art of negotiating differences, of compromising irreconcilables and holding to agreements with gentlemanly courtesy, let's begin where they are. Teach boys what to do when someone grabs the ball away from him or shouts that his mother is a prostitute.

Social science lessons can be built around incidents in the here and now. Boys must memorize facts about Valley Forge and Gettysburg and Waterloo, but they must also participate in peace conferences both as combatants and as proto-lawyers and juries.

A student council for a handful of upper class students is not enough. Without guidance they will be far more punitive than their teachers would dare to be. Third grade is not too young to begin instruction in taking turns, telling both sides of a story, apologizing, accepting an apology and shaking hands. Nor does the principal need to preside over each session. With encouragement and permission, teachers can manage. They must clearly understand however, that negotiation is not a trial. The purpose is not to place blame and assign penance. Negotiation is listening to both sides and coming to a agreement that both can accept. It might take all of fifteen minutes but it is time well spent.

The Lunch Line

If running and shouting and pushing add up to a bedlam of spilled milk and anguished crying during the lunch hour, the problem is probably one of logistics. Whoever is in charge must stand back and consider the situation as a management systems engineer rather than as a policeman.

Even if the children come from homes where courtesy and table manners are strange unknowns, punishment is more likely to compound the uneasiness than to teach cooperative concern for others. Requiring absolute silence as an antidote to the unholy racket of squealing voices and clattering crockery may freeze the youngest into frightened quiet but will drive the older ones across the street into the pizza parlor off limits.

Systems-wise administrators stagger noon dismissals so that the youngest are served first, perhaps with an upper class host or hostess heading each table. Conversation thus can be free without being boisterous. A certain amount of decorum adds an educational dimension to both the little ones and their surrogate parents. They will need a bit of coaching about how to persuade the fussy eater to try just one bite of carrots and to leave the rest on his plate rather than complaining loudly or trying to dispose of them under the table.

Similarly, they are aware that insisting upon single sex tables does not solve any problems these days. Keeping the lunch tickets donated to the needy the same color as the regular paid for ones reduces a smouldering resentment. Student helpers to direct the garbage into the right cans, the arrangement of the entrances and exits, the timing, the furniture, the kind and quality of the food and provision for unexpected emergencies all affect the behavior of the children as does also the manner of handling the odd one who might need to be slowed down or removed. Courtesy and style on the part of the "head waiter" is all that is needed to make lunchtime run smoothly.

TROUBLE SPOTS

The Coach

The athletic coach in Junior High is usually a superlative appendage to the school: either the very best thing that could happen or the worst. At his best he is a pillar of strength to the students and staff, a barrel of fun to the players and a safe haven for embarrassing confidences. He talks turkey about drugs, failure, v.d. and the current fads; he knows everything about boys. In fact he was one himself and has never quite outgrown his pleasure in boyish things. He really believes in character training and goodsportsmanship and of course, winning honorably.

At his worst he is an immature bully who takes a perverse delight in baiting the boys, teasing and hassling yet demanding obedience as only the narrow authoritarian personality can. About half the horror tales about corporal punishment involve the coach. If an administrator is stuck with one such and tenure consideration do not permit letting him go, it may be that his paddle toy will have to be taken away from him.

RENT-A-SUIT

The commonest problem of the coach is the forgotten gym suit. When these are not supplied by the school a regular 2 to 10 percent will be found sitting on the bench for lack of a proper outfit. One ingenious department of physical education solved it by setting up a RENT-A-SUIT system. Lost, outgrown or other discarded outfits were stockpiled and loaned to the forgetters at 10c a period. If the student had no dime, an IOU would be accepted. Those who collected IOU's were permitted to redeem them by service. Taking the suits to the laundromat, repairing, replacing tennis shoes, taking inventory and similar chores that did not break union rules of the maintenance staff were found quite acceptable by all concerned.

TROUBLE SPOTS

Language

"Such language!" is not the kind that can be remedied by bi-lingual education. It refers rather, to the use of unacceptable words, phrases, gestures with a connotation of defiance and couched in sexual or scatological metaphors. Sometimes it sounds sacrilegious to ladylike ears and rouses almost uncontrollable shock and anger. Next to fighting it is the commonest cause for punishment.

"Language" is as much a problem of the adults as it is of the children. We hear its symbolic defiance and react with primordial fury. An analysis of swearing will help cool the trigger temper that it inspires.

First: Everyone knows the sub-language and understands it. It is not confined to army barracks or singles bars. It is not the words but the time and place that are inappropriate. If we did not know or understand the words we could not be insulted by them.

Second: When we hear our contemporaries use such words and gestures (Vice-president Rockefeller offended on nation wide television) we may be dismayed; we may disapprove, we may leave the scene, but we do not lash out with physical violence. Not in today's world.

Third: Children hear the words from the screen, from their parents, from their contemporaries. They are learning the uses of a special vocabulary and do not, cannot, really intend the amount of venom that we hear from their comparatively innocent lips.

Fourth: Most of the disapproval arises when little Miss Nicey comes to the teacher and tattles, "Johnny said a bad word!" (How does she know it's bad? Her knowledge is as guilty as his.)

We can persuade children that school is a special place, like church or a high class enclave where words of Norman-French origin are acceptable but slave words from the Anglo-Saxon are simply not used. We can do this more successfully as we use disapproval with style rather than with the primitive lash.

PRAISE

DOES

WONDERS

HOW TO HANDLE THE DISRUPTIVE STUDENT

"Disruptive" may mean anything from a restless kindergardener who doesn't sit still for story time to a screaming, cursing teenager running rampant through the halls, a knife in his hand. It may mean whispering during an examination or non-stop activity up and down and around in total distraction. It may include a bright child with a compulsive need to be the center of attention and a dreamer who needs many reminders to get the simplest job done. Obviously no recipe can encompass all these with a single prescription. We will need to distinguish among at least six quite different groups of disruptive types and apply special remedies to each.

THE HARD CORE CRIMINAL

The law breaker cannot be contained in a regular school any more than an adult law breaker can be allowed to remain at large. If guns, knives or illegal drugs appear in the corridors or at the stadium confiscate the contraband and turn it over to the Juvenile unit of the Police Department. Be sure you know the law and the legal rights of minors. Do not be surprised if the officers appear more casual about the situation than you can. Follow their advice and above all remain on good terms with them, and, what may be more difficult, with the young people who seem to be headed for a life of crime. Most of them will make good eventually and you may be a key person in preventing more tragedies by helping them return to the mainstream. Your faith that they can make it in the real world will be justified in most cases. Do not imagine, however, that young men who have dipped into a hard world of crime are going to be intimidated by a wooden board wielded by an old man. You couldn't hurt them enough to merit more than a sneer. If the insult to their pride is great enough, expect retaliation by way of a vandalized school, mysteriously flat tires or something even more sinister. You can protect the school best by recognizing that it is a microcosm of the wider world and crime is a fact of life best handled by professionals.

THE RADICAL PROTESTER

If you are confronted by a vocal minority with a copy of **School Stoppers Textbook** in one hand and a fistful of leaflets in the other, you would be wise to think in terms of negotiation rather than punishment. These kids are bright; they have been coached in the law and might win their case if it should get into court.

Listen to their demands even though you may insist that they speak one at a time and somewhat formally. If some are trivial ("No more reconstituted french fries for lunch."), agree and do something about it. If the demands are debatable ("No more required P.E."), try for a compromise, perhaps a choice in the senior year. If what they ask sounds totally absurd, (Sex Rights Day) hold your gasps of indignation and discuss the matter seriously with the aplomb of a negotiator for General Motors considering Union demands for a clause granting insurance for pregnancy reimbursements.

What radicalized students want is to be taken seriously and to be treated with the respect due adults. They feel that dress and hair codes are for babies, that all the racism and sexism has not been extirpated from the curriculum and that students should be consulted when new regulations (such as ID cards) are to be introduced. They sneer at inadequate sex education and ultra-bright school spirit. A puppet student council that rubber stamps administrative decisions is fair game for their sarcasm, and suspensions for gum chewing or the wearing of scarfs and stocking caps can set in motion a picket line.

Do not be misled because only a small number are involved. Difficult demonstrators are deeply committed; from their ranks are enlisted the movers and shakers of the world. They may be wrong but they are seldom silly and the Supreme Court has granted them the right to publish and to protest.

THE ABUSED AND NEGLECTED

The child who is hungry or cold, whose clothing is filthy, torn or smells of urine rouses the teachers exasperation as well as pity. When such a child falls asleep in class or otherwise disrupts, anger is directed at the neglectful parents rather than at the child. Laws now require that such children be reported to Child Protective Services, the Welfare Department or to the police.

The physically abused child is less easily recognized; he is more likely to be labelled "brat." Scars and bruises are usually covered by clothing and the psychological scars, shown by his behavior, is most often misunderstood. The reason for this is the curious but widespread belief that children who misbehave in school have never been disciplined at home. It is assumed that unspanked children do as they please and that what they please is always troublesome.

The facts are quite otherwise. It is the rejected child who, from being unloved, becomes unlovable. He turns into a sneak thief, a despoiler, a bully, a picker of fights for no reason. He has been punished severely, erratically and without pity. Belts, wires, electric cords, ropes, kitchen tools and tire irons have been beating the devil out of him since he was born. He has become inured to threats and reprimands and does not know what to do to change things. Nothing in his world makes sense.

He arrives in kindergarten loud and feisty or sullen and withdrawn, and always uncooperative. He will flinch when an adult comes near and duck the expected blow unable to read any other intention. His vocabulary is precocious in swear words but otherwise deficient. Parent conferences result in more beatings.

He needs to be rescued, his parents counseled and helped out of their troubles. Most of all he needs the salutary experience of being accepted and valued. Love is too much to ask.

THE TEMPORARILY DISTURBED

Death in the family, divorce, tragedies of all sorts, tellable or secret, upset children in strange and diverse ways. They rarely cry or act bereaved at funerals, yet have nightmares weeks or months later. Quarreling parents may make children touchy or preoccupied, or angry or frightened or, strangely, more diligent. The mood may change from day to day; they may be unpredictable except that whatever their reaction, it is likely to be heightened from the normal.

Few children escape all life's stumbling blocks. In small communities their troubles are generally known and teachers quite naturally make allowances. Some are able to say the right word at a crucial moment but some twist the knife in the wound. In large impersonal cities, home life is usually not common knowledge; all a teacher may notice is that one child is not behaving well lately.

If the single answer to misbehavior is a paddling, the fear, misery and loneliness is compounded and the time needed for recovery is stretched. Empathetic correction rather than rigid punishment or maudlin remarks is the most constructive attitude. Some children will openly court sympathy; some dread being conspicuous. Teachers cannot hope to be therapists but can avoid being a part of the problem.

CULTURE CLASH

Teachers are the least prejudiced of any segment of society because the young of every species is attractive if not downright cuddlesome. But children bring their social habits from home, and to the beginning teacher some of these are strange indeed.

Some must be curbed. The rural permission to toilet in the fields cannot be transplanted to city pavements or schoolyards. Crowding about and asking for money seems innocent enough to those used to children begging this way but cannot be condoned when lunch money of other children is at stake and the begging is heard as threats to rip-off. Chanting the dozens is seriously provocative to volatile Latins although it may mean only rhythmic humor to Afro-Americans.

Other customs are so minor that only lack of familiarity makes them seem deviant. Hair styles, occasions for eye contact and gaze avoidance, pitch of laughter, face saving devices of various kinds, preferences in music and dance, courtesies and put-downs—all these can be interpreted as lack of cooperativeness, attentiveness or proper deportment.

No public good is served by insisting on conformity in details of conduct that are not in themselves disruptive.

A sorting of those customs that are disfunctional in a space age society from those that are interesting and charming variations on the theme of being human can best be accomplished by an integrated faculty. Informal conversation in the coffee room is a congenial way of groups educating each other into the mysteries of the melting pot that is America....

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SCHOOL CAUSED DISRUPTIONS

Part of the fault for disorderly schools must be borne by the administrators. They set the tone by their attention either to achievement and honors or exclusively to tardiness and lunchroom chatter. Who looks for evil will find it; who looks for good will create it.

Attention to the construction of a relevant set of curriculum offerings, keeping the honor roll more prominent than the list of delinquents, active listening to the parents and the community, a genuine fascination with and loyalty to the school will dissolve an enormous amount of antagonism and hence disruption.

If students and faculty are adversaries busily hunting for ways to outwit each other, little learning takes place. If the faculty in response to minor mistakes and petty infractions continues to break out the paddle and batter at those too small to retaliate, no improvement can be expected.

Every blow meted out to a child is passed on, sooner or later to someone else younger and more helpless.

"If ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

WEE PALS

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO A CHILD'S DISRUPTIVENESS

(after David Welch, University of Northern Colorado
and Anne C. Richards, West Georgia College)

Education
Without
Flagellation

"...Schools are often perceived by parents as bearers of cultural norms concerning proper child rearing practices and discipline. Hence, when schools and other child care settings employ practices not conducive to optimal child development, e.g. corporal punishment and other demeaning and threatening, negative disciplinary measures, they convey a subtle message to parents, namely that such measures are appropriate, as they are sanctioned by educational authorities and 'experts'."

"Violence Against Children"

David G. Gil
Professor of Social Policy
Brandeis University
Waltham, Ma.

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